GLEN EIRA CITY COUNCIL

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve dog off-leash area

Engagement summary report

JULY 2024

BENTLEIGH

BENTLEIGH EAST

BRIGHTON EAST

CARNEGIE

CAULFIELD

ELSTERNWICK

GARDENVALE

GLEN HUNTLY

MCKINNON

MURRUMBEENA

ORMOND

ST KILDA EAST

Executive summary

Community engagement on the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve (the Reserve) dog off-leash area covered a four-week period from 22 May 2024 to 19 June 2024. The engagement sought community feedback about the proposal to formalise a fenced dog off-leash area in the north-west corner of the Reserve in line with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*.

Opportunities for formal community feedback included:

- a Have Your Say Glen Eira web page including an online submission form
- mailed submissions
- emails sent to Council.

We promoted the engagement through a range of channels, including social media, SMS broadcast to local registered dog owners, posters at the Reserve, a news item on Council's website, emails to stakeholders, and three pop-up sessions at the Reserve.

What we heard

In total, we received **381 feedback submissions** from the Have Your Say platform and emails received. There were **368 surveys** completed through Have Your Say which provide quantitative and qualitative data for the community's preferences. We received written feedback in **13 emails**. No mailed submissions were received.

The feedback about the proposal is mixed, with a majority of respondents indicating support. Council received extensive feedback that shows the Reserve is valued as a community space, including the current use as an entirely dog off-leash area. Responses include concerns around safety and wellbeing for the community, pets, wildlife and environment.

The quantitative feedback provided through the Have Your Say survey shows:



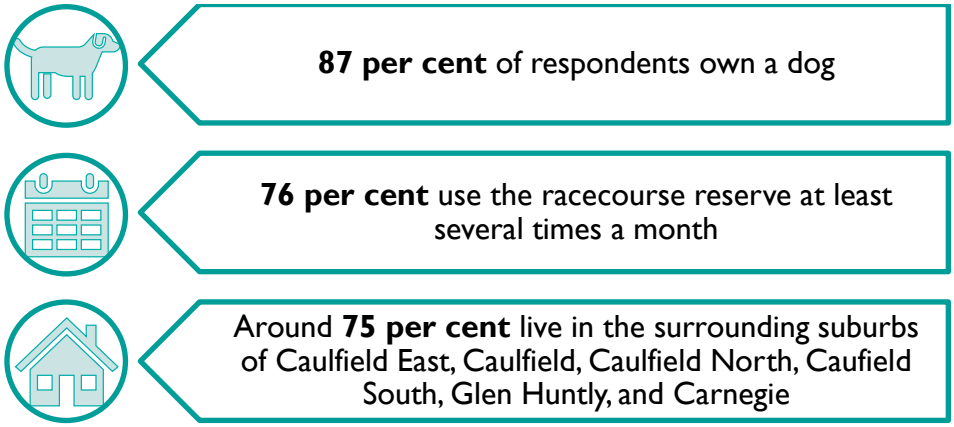
62 per cent of respondents support the proposal



38 per cent do not support the proposal

The survey results show that people who use the Reserve less often show higher support for the proposal. The survey results also show that support for the proposal is higher from respondents that do not own a dog (**83 per cent**) compared to respondents that do own a dog (**59 per cent**).

The quantitative data also shows:



The free-text feedback (**31,800 words**) shows that the community highly values the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve.

Feedback that supports the proposal (**62 per cent**) includes themes of:

- Support for the provision of a fenced dog park.
- The importance of a large open space for community use.
- Safety and security for dogs and people.
- The importance of protecting the environment and wildlife.
- Consideration of responsible pet ownership.
- More and better fenced dog parks are needed.

Feedback that does not support the proposal (**38 per cent**) includes themes of:

- Preference for the whole reserve to be off-leash.
- The impacts on the safety and wellbeing of dogs and dog owners.
- Dog owners are the most significant users of the Reserve.
- The designated area being inadequate.
- The scope of the consultation being too narrow.

Engagement report

Background

Council has proposed to formalise a fenced dog off-leash area in the north-west corner of the Reserve in line with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. This would support broader community use of the Reserve and give pet owners a designated and safe place to exercise their dogs off-leash.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

The Reserve is an important open space located in the heart of Caulfield. The Reserve is Crown Land, owned by the Victorian Government and looked after by the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust (the Trust). It hosts the horse racing Melbourne Racing Club venue.

The Reserve includes a large, open space surrounded by the racecourse. It features two wetlands, BBQ and picnic areas, walking trails, and informal sports fields. Situated next to Caulfield Station, Glen Huntly Park, and Glen Eira College, it is accessible through five gates.

The Reserve is open to the public every day apart from racing days. In the past, the Reserve has been open to the public to exercise dogs off-leash and this has been managed by the Trust. However, the Reserve is formally a dog on-leash area.

Council's role

Council has a legislated role in the control of dogs in public places under the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. All dogs must be on a leash in public places, except in designated dog off-leash areas. Designated areas must be declared off-leash under section 26(2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

There has been no declaration of an off-leash area in the Reserve, so it is currently all on-leash. Council's Civic Compliance officers handle reports of dogs not being controlled, dog attacks and stray dogs at the Reserve. Council is legally required to monitor and respond to these incidents.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust

The Trust is an independent body appointed by the Minister for Environment to be responsible for the Reserve. The Trust functions as a Committee of Management and manages planning, development, operation and use according to the *Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Act 2017*.

These responsibilities include the signage, lighting, fencing, and maintenance of the Reserve and the proposed dog off-leash area. The Trust's *Strategic Management Plan* guides the long-term vision for the Reserve and future development plans.

Community engagement

Council's *Community Engagement Policy* requires community engagement at a 'Consult' level for the proposed changes.

Engaging the community

Council sought to engage with our community about the proposal. We developed a broad communication and community engagement program to seek community feedback about the proposal to formalise the dog off-leash area over a four-week period from **22 May to 19 June 2024**.

The engagement program included:

- a Have Your Say Glen Eira webpage at: www.haveyoursaygleneira.com.au/caulfield-racecourse-reserve-dog-off-leash-area
- a community survey accessible on the Have Your Say webpage asking people for their feedback
- FAQs and information about the proposal
- three on-site pop-up sessions with Council officers and a member of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust.

The survey consisted of five questions about the subject matter and seven questions for demographics and contact details.

The subject matter questions asked respondents to indicate whether they support the proposal, and to explain their reasons why or why not. It also asked for respondents to indicate their frequency and type of usage of the Reserve, and if they had any suggestions for features to add to the Reserve.

The detailed responses to this engagement are outlined in the community survey responses section of this report.

Communication activities

A broad communication campaign using various channels was used to raise awareness and engage local dog owners and the broader community. Supporting the engagement program was a broad communication approach. The table below outlines the communication activities undertaken during the campaign.

Communication activities	Reach
Have Your Say survey page Background information and community survey. Survey opened on 22 May and closed on 19 June 2024.	Page views: 1,125
Social media Glen Eira City Council posts on Facebook and Instagram.	Impressions: 4,913 Reach: 2,299 Engagements: 79 Link clicks: 37

Council website News item on Council's website announcing the engagement.	Page views: 70 Link clicks: 33
Glen Eira News One article in the May edition of Glen Eira News.	Distributed to approximately 64,500 residences
Posters Promotional posters were displayed at the Reserve.	Posters: 8
Community engagement newsletter June newsletter.	Reach: 4,456 Opens: 2,483 Clicks: 59 direct to HYS page
Community and stakeholder groups • Melbourne Dog Trainers • Secret Dogs Business • Command Dog Training • 3D's Dog Training • Glen Iris Dog Training Club • Hellopuppy • Moorabbin Obedience Dog Club • Positive K9 Training • Puppy Professor • Save Caulfield Racecourse Reserve group • GECAN Glen Eira Climate Emergency Action Network • Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)	Emails: 12
SMS to registered dog owners Sent to registered dog owners in the surrounding suburbs of Caulfield, Caulfield North, and Caulfield East.	SMS: 670
Letterbox drop Letters delivered to residents in the surrounding area.	Letters: 2,924
Radio Mentioned on Golden Days Radio 95.7FM on 8 June.	Mentions: 1

Engagement activities	Number who participated
Have Your Say community survey	368
Emails to Council	13

Insights and analysis

Opportunities for formal feedback included an online survey at www.haveyoursaygleneira.com.au/caulfield-racecourse-reserve-dog-off-leash-area, emails to Council, and by submissions via post.

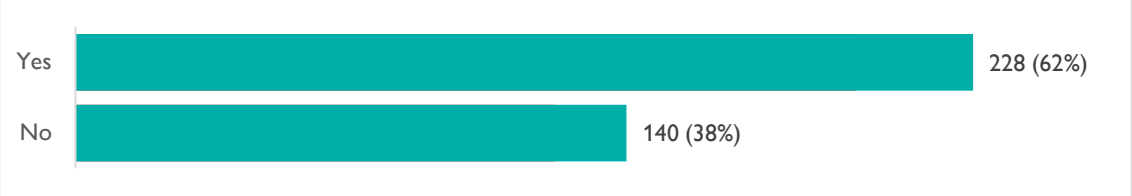
A total of **381** submissions were received. **368** responses were received through the online survey and **13** email submissions were received by Council. There were zero submissions received via post.

The submissions received included extensive feedback from respondents, totaling around **30,800 words**. This feedback has been provided in full to Councillors and the project team.

Community survey responses

Q.1 Do you support the proposal to formalise a fenced dog off-leash area in the north-west corner of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve? *Required. Single choice.*
368 responses.

62 per cent of respondents chose "Yes" to support the proposal, and 38 per cent of respondents chose "No" they did not support the proposal.



Q.2 Why or why not? *Optional. Free text.*
325 responses.

Example responses from respondents who chose "Yes" in Q.1:

There are too many dogs running around the Reserve unsupervised. They jump on adults and children (including my daughter) and many owners don't care. Many dogs also chase birds and I have seen many dogs in the southern lake chasing birds. This is not fair as these birds will not stay in the water and will not breed there. Having the dogs on lead around the Reserve will ensure that wildlife is protected, which is very important.
Also, there is dog poo all around the Reserve. It is just left in the grass in piles or left in bags. If dogs are supervised on leash, owners will see where the poo is and pick up after their dogs (hopefully). Wherever you walk around the Reserve, there is dog poo. This is unsatisfactory in such an amazing place in Glen Eira.

I hope that more inspectors come to the Reserve to ensure dogs are on lead in the Reserve. The off leash area is a big size and has a pond, so dogs have a very good place to run around. They should not run around the whole Racecourse Reserve. They should be on- lead.

To protect people who walk around the reserve.
To protect wildlife, especially birds who live at the reserve.
Too many dogs run around the reserve out of control and unsupervised.

Glen Eira Council Staff need to regularly check that dogs are in the off-leash area only.

Although 8,800 dog registrations sounds like a lot of dog ownerships- given Glen Eira has approx 66,000 dwellings the rate of dog ownership would be about 10% of households. This public space should therefore serve the interests and safety of majority of residents, and be made a safe place for all people of all ages and esp importantly protect the local wildlife at this site from free-roaming dogs.

Example responses from respondents who chose "No" in Q.1:

This consultation seems to limit discussion to the corralling of our dogs in a small constrained cage in the corner of a massive open space park that has been used for community, and especially dog owners to run their dogs for decades. This is unreasonable as it significantly limits current community dog owners of different sizes and needs from enjoying the unique and safe wider area of the racecourse public areas where they can now relax with, exercise with and generally enjoy their pets without the anxiety of other pet and personality interactions now being forced by this proposal - as we have for decades.

Forcing that many dogs into such a small space is bound to see an increase of instances where dogs don't get along resulting in possible altercations. With both lakes being full fenced off there is no longer any threat to damage local flora and fauna and so much open space still available to access without incident. I agree dogs should be kept under control at all times and most that access the reserve do so. But suddenly limiting this area would see a drastic decrease in use in my opinion, and it's my belief this has all been orchestrated to achieve such a result. Provision of better lighting in the evenings would be great, at this time of year with the sun setting much earlier and closing the gates at sunset doesn't provide any realistic opportunity to exercise dogs after work.

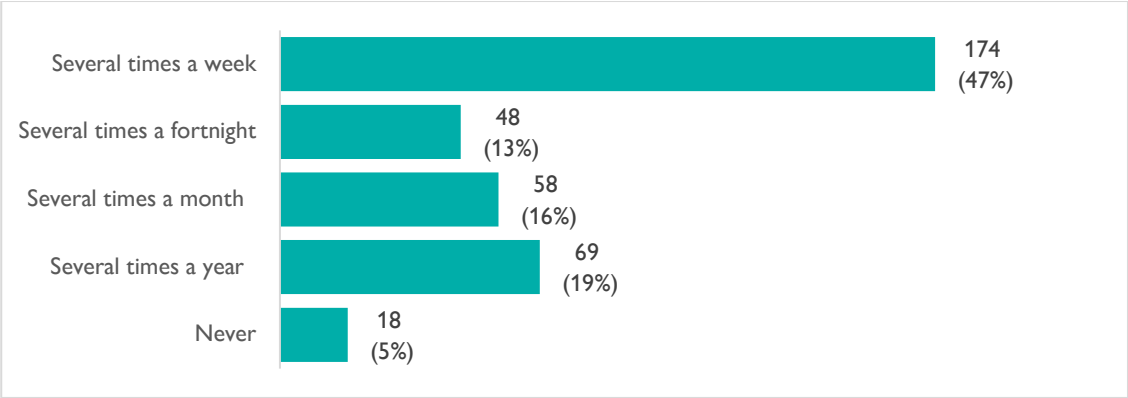
I walk many dog here throughout the week, and like many others, I have been using this amazing open space for several years without incident. The very small and restrictive off-lead area is exactly that! There needs to be more room for dogs as DOGS AND DOG WALKERS predominantly use this space.

Q.3 How often do you use the Reserve? *Optional. Single choice.*

367 responses.

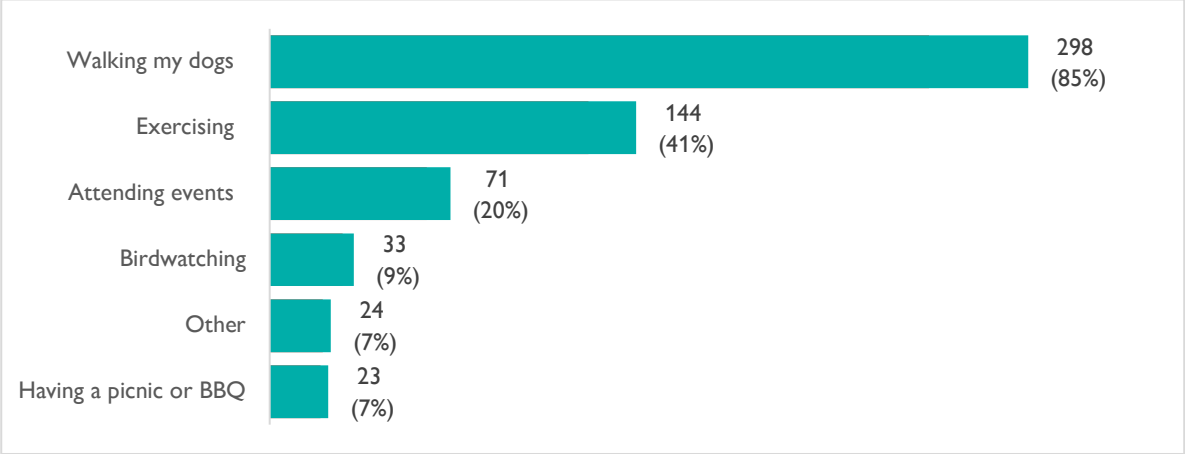
Respondents most commonly indicated that they use the Reserve *several times a week*, which was selected by 174 respondents (**47 per cent**). The next frequency was *several*

times a year (**19 per cent**), followed by *several times a month* (**16 per cent**), *several times a fortnight* (**13 per cent**), and *never* (**5 per cent**).



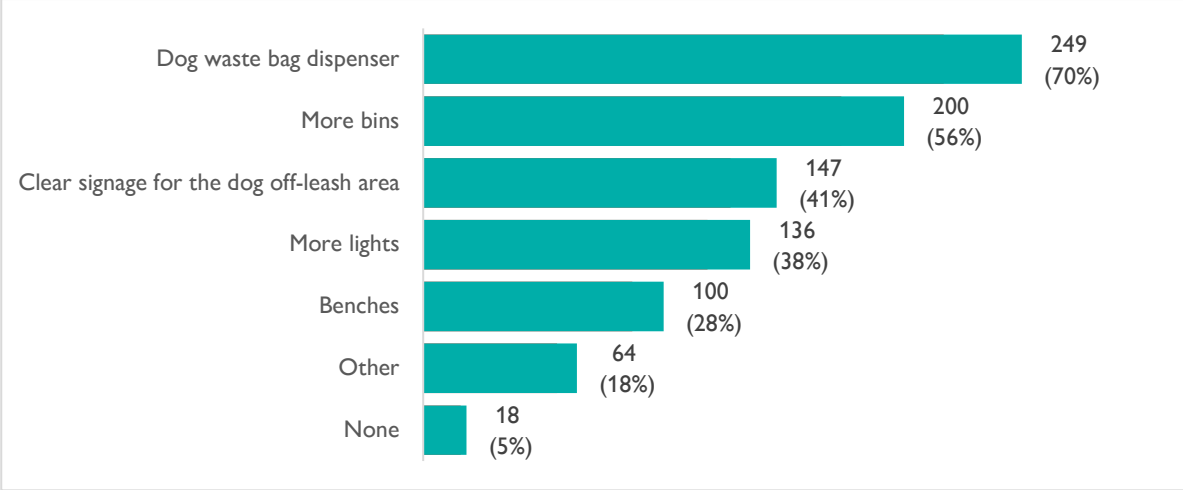
Q.4 How do you use the Reserve? *Optional. Multiple choices allowed.*
349 responses.

The most significant use of the Reserve by respondents is *walking my dogs*, which was selected by 298 respondents (**85 per cent**). The next most significant uses selected were *exercising* (**41 per cent**) and *attending events* (**20 per cent**).



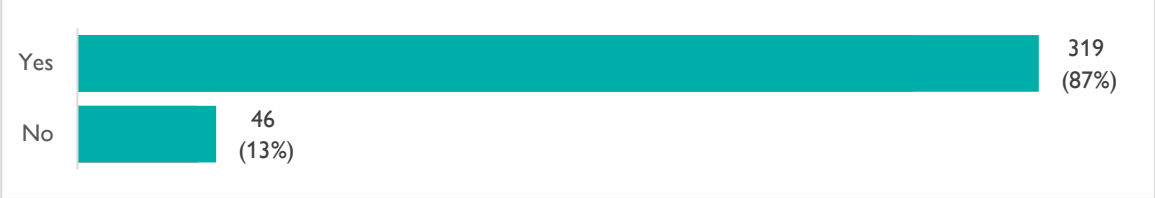
Q.5 What extra features should the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust think about adding? *Optional. Multiple choices allowed.*
355 responses.

The most requested feature was *dog waste bag dispenser*, which was selected by 249 respondents (**70 per cent**). The next most requested features were *more bins* (**56 per cent**), *clear signage for the dog off-leash area* (**41 per cent**), and *more lights* (**38 per cent**).



Q.6 Do you own a dog? *Optional. Single choice.*
365 responses.

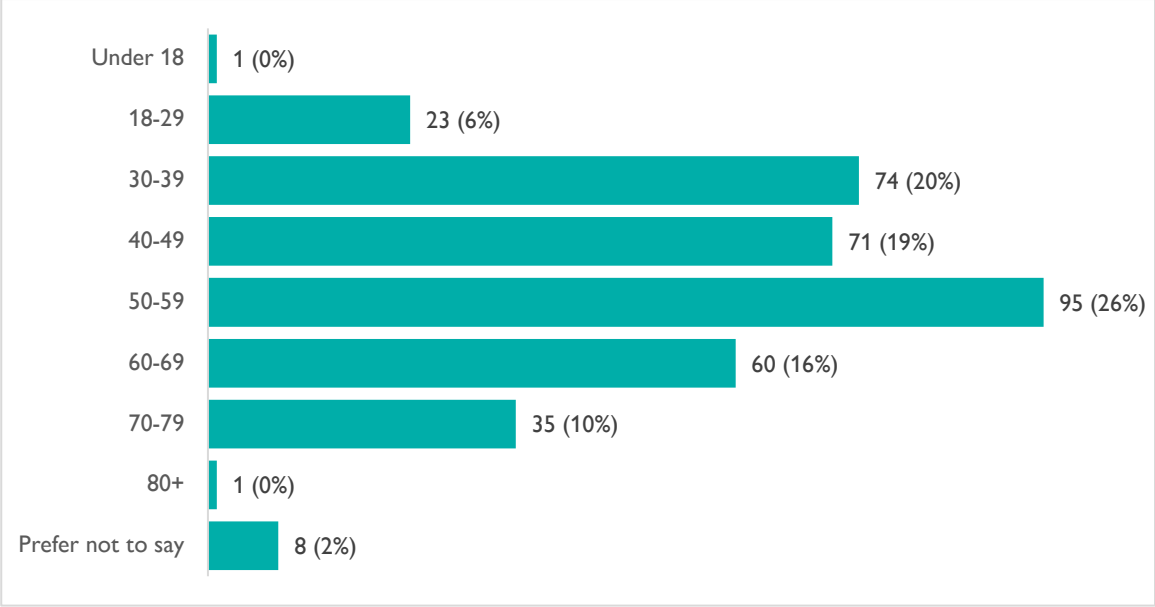
A significant majority (**87 per cent**) of respondents own a dog. **13 per cent** of respondents do not own a dog.



Q.7 Email. *Required. Free-text question.*
368 responses. *CONFIDENTIAL.*

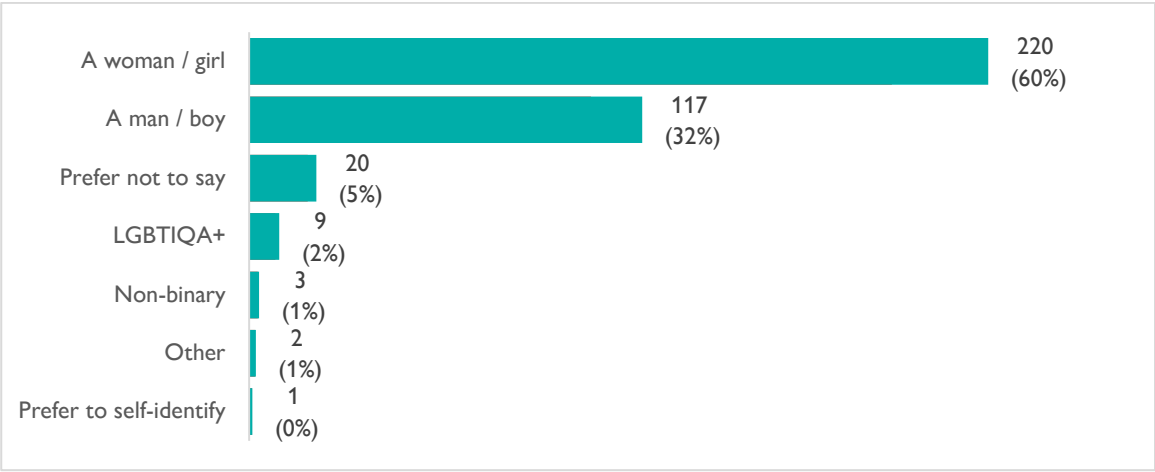
Q.8 Your age group. *Optional. Single choice.*
368 responses.

All age groups received responses. The 50–59 age group is most highly represented with 95 responses (**26 per cent**). Age groups 30–39 (**20 per cent**) and 40–49 (**19 per cent**) were the next most represented. Age groups of Under 18 and Over 80 were each represented by only one respondent.



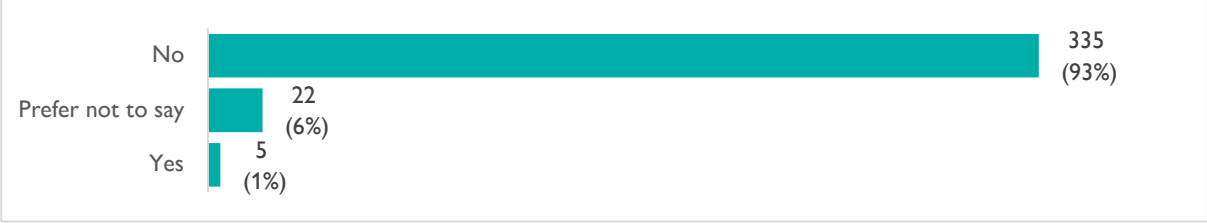
Q.9 Your identity is: *Optional. Multiple choice allowed.*
366 responses.

The most highly represented gender group is *a woman/girl* with 220 responses (**60 per cent**). *A man/boy* received 117 responses (**32 per cent**).



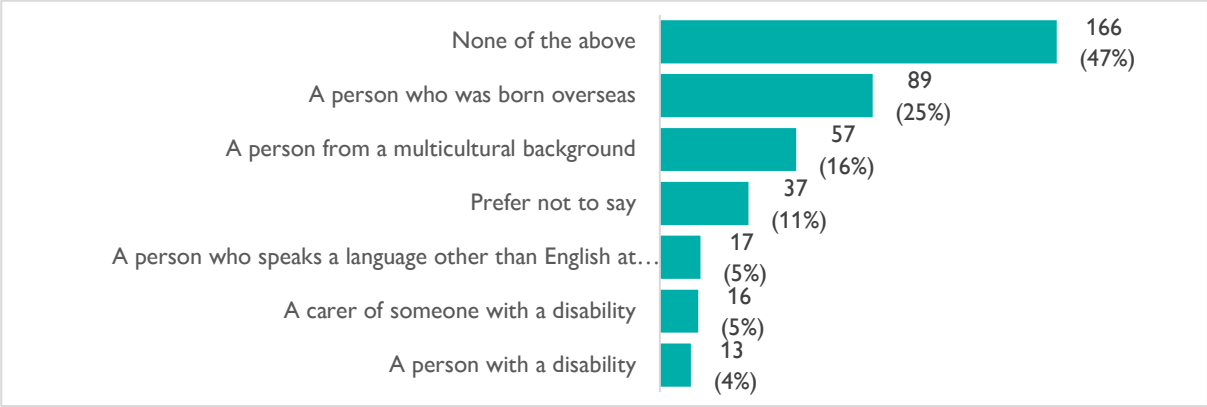
Q.10 Do you identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? *Optional. Single choice.*
362 responses.

The majority of respondents (**99 per cent**) indicated that they are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or would prefer not to say. 5 respondents (**one per cent**) indicated that they identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.



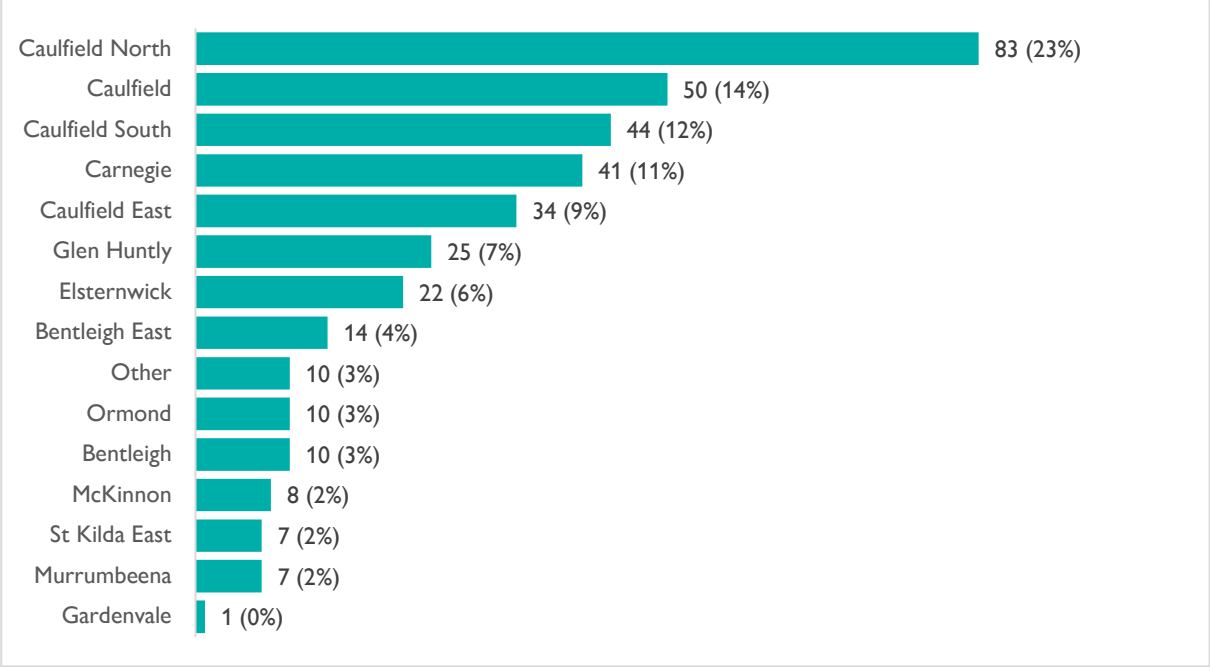
Q.11 I am: *Optional. Multiple choice allowed.*
350 responses.

Responses indicated a high number of *people who were born overseas* (**25 per cent**), and *people from a multicultural background* (**16 per cent**).



Q.12 Suburb of residence. *Optional. Single choice.*
366 responses.

The most common suburb of residence is Caulfield North, with 83 responses (**23 per cent**). The next most common suburbs were Caulfield (**14 per cent**), Caulfield South (**12 per cent**), Carnegie (**11 per cent**), and Caulfield East (**nine per cent**).



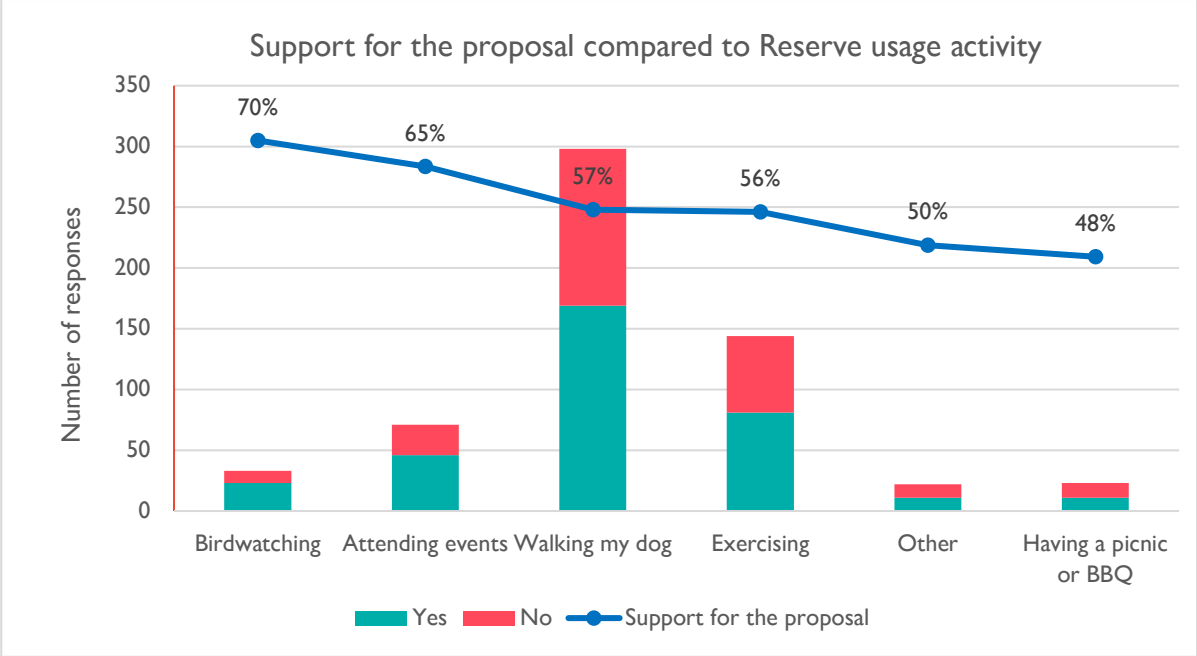
Survey data analysis

We undertook further analysis to demonstrate trends across the various data subsets. The analysis below compares respondents' support for the proposal according to their usage activity, how frequently they use the Reserve, whether they own a dog, and their age group.

Support for the proposal compared to usage activity

The survey results show that support for the proposal is relatively high from respondents who use the Reserve for birdwatching (**70 per cent**) and attending events (**65 per cent**). These results are marginally higher than the 62 percent overall support for the proposal.

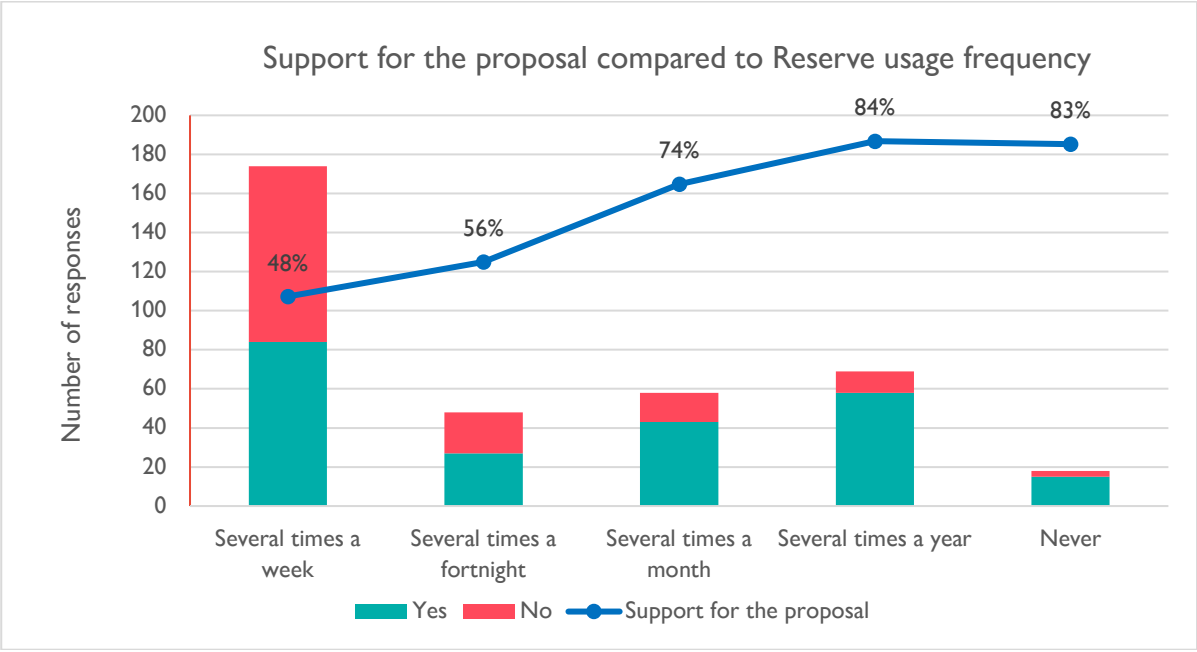
Support is more mixed from respondents who use the Reserve to walk their dogs (**57 per cent**), exercise (**56 per cent**), other (**50 per cent**), and have picnics or BBQ (**48 per cent**).



Support for the proposal compared to usage frequency

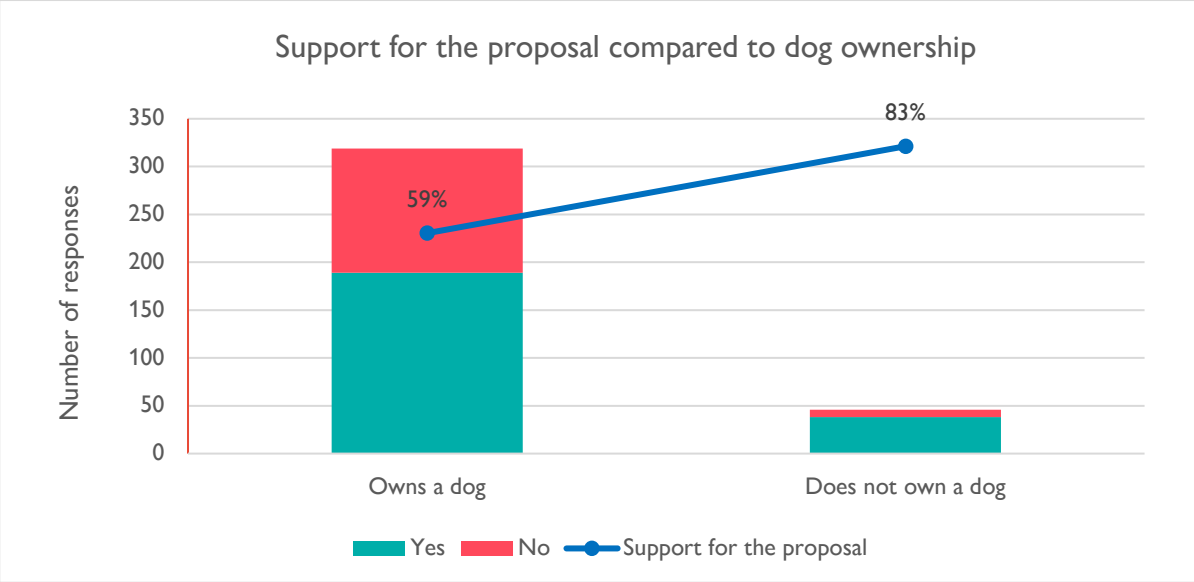
The survey results show that people who use the Reserve less often show higher support for the proposal.

The highest support comes from people who use the Reserve several times a year (**84 per cent**), never (**83 per cent**), and several times a month (**74 per cent**), compared with 62 per cent overall support. The support is mixed from people who use the Reserve several times a fortnight (**56 per cent**) and several times a week (**48 per cent**).



Support for the proposal compared to dog ownership

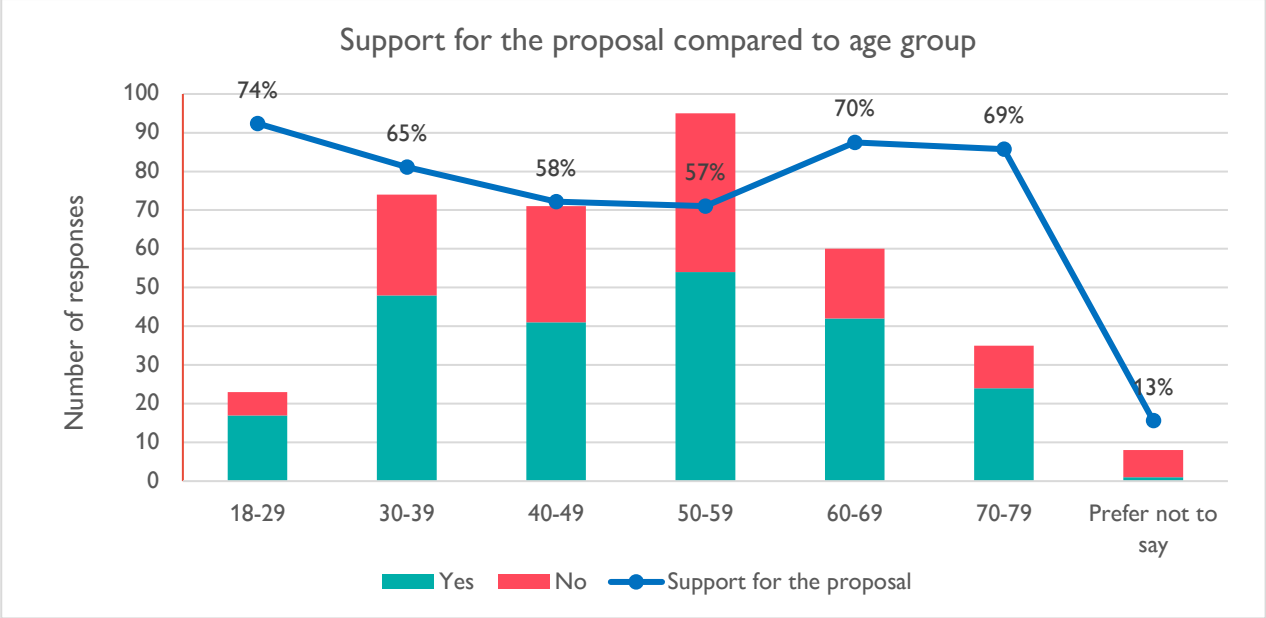
The survey results show that support for the proposal is higher from respondents that do not own a dog (**83 per cent**) compared to respondents that do own a dog (**59 per cent**).



Support for the proposal compared to age groups

The survey results show that there is most support for the proposal in the 18–29 age group (**74 per cent**), 60–69 age group (**70 per cent**), 70–79 age group (**69 per cent**), and 30–39 age group (**65 per cent**).

There is mixed support from the 40–49 age group (**58 per cent**) and 50–59 age group (**57 per cent**). Respondents who preferred not to say their age (8 respondents) had very low support (**13 per cent**).



Note: The age groups of under 18 and over 80 have been excluded for privacy due to low response rates.

Email submissions

The engagement@gleneira.vic.gov.au inbox is a formal channel for engagement and promoted through the Have Your Say website. Emails received to other Council email accounts, including officers and Councillors, are forwarded to the engagement inbox to capture feedback. **13** emails (**11,100 words**) from community members were received about this project. All email submissions have been anonymised and provided to Councillors and the project team.

Free-text feedback analysis

The free-text feedback from both the Have Your Say survey and emails (combined total approximately **31,800 words**) has been deidentified and provided to Council. The Have Your Say free-text feedback (**22,700 words**) has been themed below, and sorted by the percentage of responses that mention each theme.

Of the **325 responses** which provided free-text feedback to question two, **185 responses** support the proposal and **140 responses** do not support the proposal.

The most common themes in the free-text feedback were:

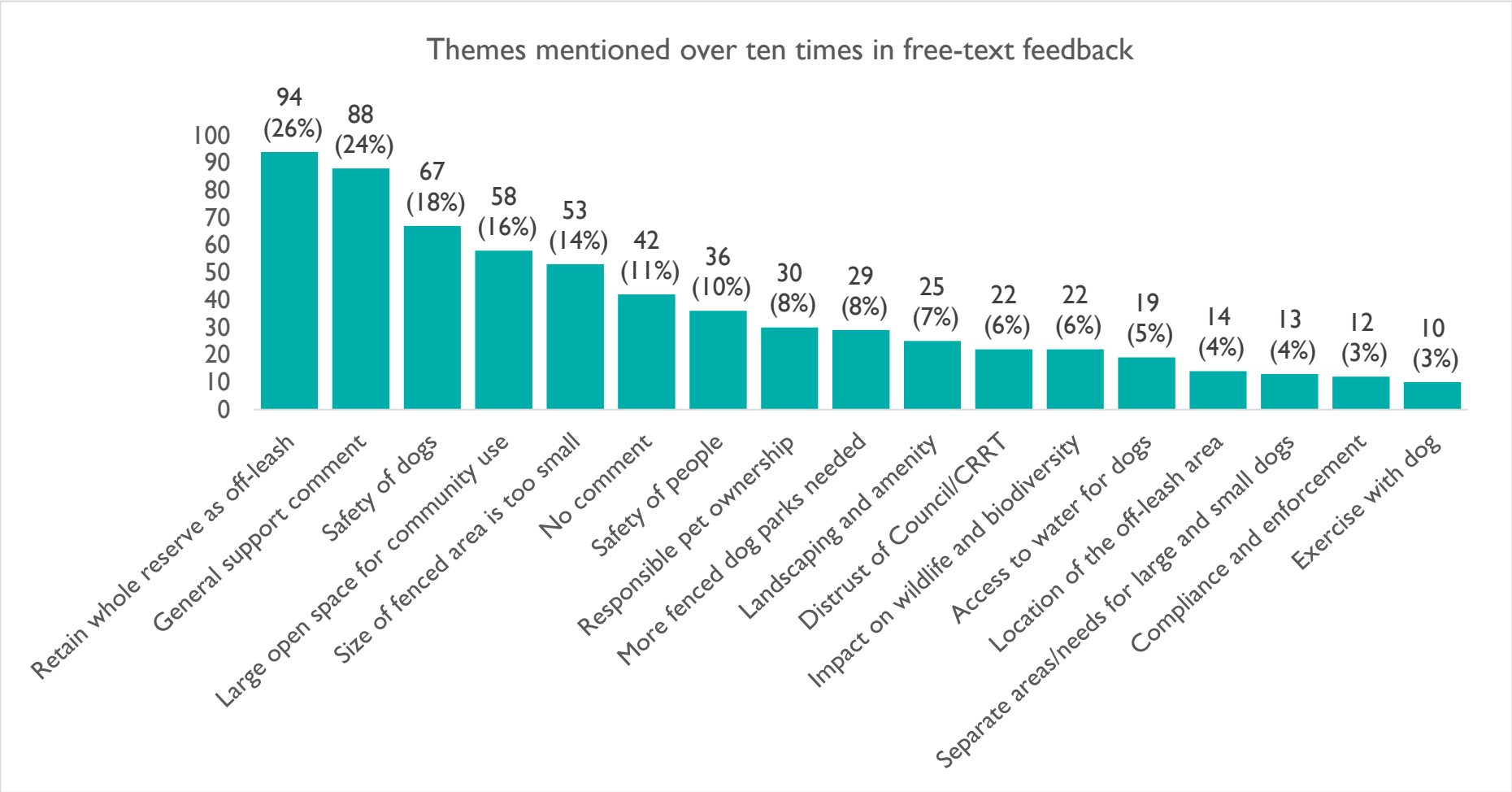
- Preference for the Reserve to be entirely off-leash (**26 per cent**)
- General support for the proposal (**24 per cent**)
- The importance of safety for dogs (**18 per cent**)
- The importance of the large open space for community use (**16 per cent**)
- Comments about the size of the fenced area being too small (**14 per cent**)
- The importance of safety for people (**10 per cent**)

Free-text feedback themes

Have Your Say question two responses — chart

Q.2 Do you support the proposal to formalise a fenced dog off-leash area in the north-west corner of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve? Why or why not?

325 responses



Have Your Say question two responses — theming table

Q.2 Do you support the proposal to formalise a fenced dog off-leash area in the north-west corner of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve? Why or why not?
325 responses.

Theme	Theme count	Percentage out of the 368 responses
Retain whole reserve as off-leash	94	26%
General support comment	88	24%
Safety of dogs	67	18%
Large open space for community use	58	16%
Size of fenced area is too small	53	14%
No comment	42	11%
Safety of people	36	10%
Responsible pet ownership	30	8%
More fenced dog parks needed	29	8%
Landscaping and amenity	25	7%
Distrust of Council/CRRT	22	6%
Impact on wildlife and biodiversity	22	6%
Access to water for dogs	19	5%
Location of the off-leash area	14	4%
Separate areas/needs for large and small dogs	13	4%
Compliance and enforcement	12	3%
Exercise with dog	10	3%
Unnecessary changes	6	2%
Rest of the reserve is under-utilised	5	1%
Create on/off leash designated times in Reserve	5	1%
There are enough dog off-leash areas	5	1%
Fencing	3	1%
Dog training	3	1%
Entire reserve should be on-leash	1	0%
Create a BMX bike track	1	0%

Have Your Say question four responses — theming table

Q.4 How do you use the Reserve? Other (please specify):

22 responses.

Theme	Theme count	Percentage out of the 368 responses
Walking	5	1%
Dog walking	4	1%
Enjoying nature and open space	4	1%
Bird surveys	2	1%
Market	2	1%
Riding with children	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Fishing	1	0%
Golf	1	0%
Dog training	1	0%

Have Your Say question five responses — theming table

Q.5 What extra features should the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust think about adding? Other (please specify):

62 responses.

Theme	Theme count	Percentage out of the 368 responses
Importance of open space	9	2%
Increase biodiversity and vegetation	9	2%
More recreational spaces	9	2%
Water for dogs and people	8	2%
On and off leash area feedback	6	2%
More signage	6	2%
Fencing	6	2%
Access	6	2%
Trees for shade	5	1%
More bins	3	1%
Wildlife sanctuary	2	1%
Compliance and enforcement of off-leash	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Lighting	1	0%
Maintenance	1	0%